

AmeriCorps NEWS

FOR AMERICORPS MEMBERS AND FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL SERVICE NETWORK

America Celebrates Five Years of AmeriCorps Service

Last fall, AmeriCorps members across the nation marked the five-year anniversary of AmeriCorps with service events and other celebrations.

"Today we celebrate a glowing success," President Clinton said at

ty for themselves, and fostering a community of all Americans."

Reflecting on the vital role of AmeriCorps members over the past five years, the President said, "Don't you think it's interesting that the biggest problems we have in

this country, and throughout this world, are rooted in the oldest, most primitive problem of human societies: We're still afraid of people who are different from us, who look different from us, who act different from us, who have different views about how to worship God or live their lives.

That's why AmeriCorps is so important."

The President was joined by the First Lady, General Colin Powell, Utah Governor Michael Leavitt, Coretta Scott King, and Sargent

Shriver. (You can find speakers' remarks and other information at www.americorps.org/5years.) The President swore in a new class of AmeriCorps members and honored the first 21 winners of the All-AmeriCorps Award, given to former members who had served above and beyond the call of duty. (See pages 4-5).

The President was introduced by Andre Crisp, a second-year AmeriCorps*NCCC member who talked about how AmeriCorps has changed his life and the lives of the people he's served. "Sometimes I think about what my life would be like if I hadn't joined AmeriCorps," he said. "Where would I be?...I don't know. But I do know that I'm a different person because of AmeriCorps. I have new hopes, new dreams, and a new outlook on life." (See page 3.)

In states and cities across the nation, governors and mayors honored AmeriCorps members and alums, and communities held service events and other activities to commemorate their accomplishments.



AmeriCorps member Trampas Stucker was one of 21 AmeriCorps members honored at the White House. From left, Coretta Scott King, the President and First Lady, AmeriCorps member Andre Crisp, Sargent Shriver, and Utah Governor Michael Leavitt.

a White House event on Oct. 20.

"AmeriCorps members are living up to the highest obligations of our citizenship. They are creating opportunities for others, taking responsibili-

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www.americorps.org/5years.



The Corporation for National Service produces AmeriCorps News to connect members and inform them about AmeriCorps activities across the country. Send comments or suggestions to amnews@cns.gov. Visit AmeriCorps News at www.americorps.org.



"Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve."

Martin Luther King Day—January 17—was a day on, *not* a day off for AmeriCorps members across the country!

Since 1994, AmeriCorps members and their national service colleagues have led the way in making the King holiday a day of service and to help make Dr. King's dream a reality.

Dr. King once said, "Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve." By getting others involved in service throughout the year, you can help bring out the greatness in others.

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Visit www.mlkday.org for information about the day of service.

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Message from Harris Wofford

Dear AmeriCorps Member:

As we marked AmeriCorps' five-year anniversary recently, we celebrated the accomplishments of more than 150,000 AmeriCorps members—and the ways that service has helped shape the rest of their lives. At the same time, I couldn't help but think about the work ahead—and about how current members like you can help AmeriCorps reach its full potential, in every state of our country.

AmeriCorps members already are making a difference in the lives of many people—children who have learned to read, families who are living in better housing, and neighborhoods that are safer.

Please join your colleagues to build on past successes and bring renewed energy to your AmeriCorps assignment. Show others in your community what service means to you, and how they can get involved themselves. We have much to celebrate after five years, but our journey is far from over.

Harris Wofford
Chief Executive Officer
Corporation for National Service

“AmeriCorps Changed My Life”: Remarks at White House Fifth-Anniversary Event

by Andre Crisp, AmeriCorps*NCCC

Two years ago, I was a high school dropout, moving from one friend's house to another, with no direction or goals. I slept all day and only got up to run the streets with my friends at night.

I took some GED classes, but I never studied, and sometimes I didn't even go to class. I just didn't care. My life was all about me and all about hanging out and having fun.



Deep down, I knew that one day I would have to change. But I didn't know how to do it or where to go for help. I couldn't get back into high school, but I knew I couldn't keep going on in the same way.

I decided to join AmeriCorps*NCCC, the National Civilian Community Corps, and my first assignment was to go to Puerto Rico to work with the American Red Cross after Hurricane George had devastated the island.

I used to think my family was poor, like when the Boys and Girls Club would bring us things at Christmas. But when I was in Puerto Rico, I saw homes destroyed and people stand-

ing in 100-degree heat all day to get supplies and food, and I realized how fortunate I was.

My life was beginning to change at that moment. I was learning to open my heart and care about others—to put others above my selfish needs and desires. As an AmeriCorps member, I realized that I could help other people—and that I wanted to do more.

My fellow members helped me get through my first year in AmeriCorps and also pushed me and tutored me and made me study. And in August, thanks to them, I got my GED.

Sometimes I think about what my life would be like if I hadn't joined AmeriCorps. Where would I be? Would I be thinking about what I

**In one year,
I accomplished more
than I thought I would
in my whole life.**



want to study in college? Or would I still be on a friend's couch sleeping the days away?

I don't know. But I do know that I'm a different person because of AmeriCorps. I have new hopes, new dreams, and a new outlook on life.

The AmeriCorps booklet you got today is called “Changing lives, changing America.” Believe me, that's true. Serving in AmeriCorps changed my life, and it also changed the lives of the people I helped.

Mr. President, I want to say thank you. Thank you for believing in young people—and for believing in me and giving me a chance to be a better citizen. In one year, I accomplished more than I thought I would in my whole life. I pushed myself past limitations and did things I never thought I could. I wish everyone could have that same chance.

*Andre Crisp is a second-year AmeriCorps*NCCC member in Washington, D.C.*

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Speakers' remarks and other information is available at www.americorps.org/5years

All-AmeriCorps Award Winners All-AmeriCorps

"Over the past five years, AmeriCorps members have taken on the toughest jobs and given vital help to millions of Americans," said Harris Wofford, chief executive officer of the Corporation for National Service. "I salute these award winners and all those who've joined AmeriCorps for demonstrating the dedication and patriotism on the home front this country needs."

Getting Things Done Award

Christine Packer, while serving with the Idaho Immunization Project in Boise, Idaho, helped start a statewide effort that boosted the immunization rate for two-year-olds from 50 percent to 70 percent and drew her to a career in public health.

Traci Chevrax developed school-based health initiatives, including Smoke Free Sheridan, a comprehensive campaign to reduce smoking among school-aged children in Sheridan, Colo.

Lin Min Kong, a lawyer serving with the National Service Legal Corps in Los Angeles, helped low-income residents of run-down public housing purchase their buildings and renovate them into safe and affordable housing.

Toni Sage started a tutoring project in Salt Lake City and brought together local students and residents to turn a vacant lot into a safe place for children and their families.

James Boland, a Marine veteran

and AmeriCorps member with the National Collaboration for Homeless Veterans in West Haven, Conn., developed mentoring, family, and crisis programs for veterans in the very facility that had helped him 12 years earlier when he was a homeless veteran.

Strengthening Communities Award

Jack Bridges, after finishing college out of state, returned home to Americus, Ga., to care for his family. As an AmeriCorps member with Habitat for Humanity, he helped launch a partnership that now engages more than 600 AmeriCorps members in building decent, affordable housing in thousands of communities.

Scott Finn graduated from Harvard University before serving in

Big Ugly Creek, W.Va., where he transformed an abandoned school building into a community center with after-school and summer programs.

Tera Oglesby developed the Seattle Police Department's first victim support team, offering a range of emergency and long-term services for victims of crime and abuse.

Anna Severens, serving in Reno, Nev., ran a free mobile preschool program operating out of a converted school bus, called COW (Classroom on Wheels). She helped double the number of children served through the program.

Byrnadett Frerker of the St. Louis Safety Corps provided disaster relief to families and communities in the wake of wildfires in Florida, a hurricane in Mississippi, floods in Missouri, and, most recently, Hurricane Floyd in North Carolina.



The winners of the first All-AmeriCorps Awards at the Corporation for National Service in Washington, D.C.

Award Winners All-AmeriCorps Award Winners

Leadership Award

Kyoko Henson started summer youth programs in Pittsburgh, launched a family tutoring program, coordinated community service projects, and now is pursuing a master's degree in social work at the University of Pittsburgh.

Kelton Young served with the Youth Crime Commission in Fort Worth, Texas, where he helped turn young people away from gangs, started 18 TRUCE sites serving more than 200 young people each, and engaged young people in activities through local YMCAs.

Mason Jenkins served with YouthBuild of New Bedford, Mass., where he built low-income housing, helped start a grassroots organization to address youth issues and coordinated a conference to open discussions between young people and public servants on the issues that affect them.

Maria del Mar Bosch trained tutors in Head Start centers in Puerto Rico and launched after-school programs for older children, including a leadership program that gives them a chance to give back to their communities through service.

Jason Lupeituu, serving in Pine Island, Minn., turned an old laundromat into the Pine Island Union of Youth, Inc., the community's only youth center.

Arthur White grew up in poverty and lived on his own from the age of 15. While serving with an AmeriCorps environmental educa-

tion program in New Hampshire, he worked with a tutoring specialist to improve his own reading and writing skills so he could better help young people.

Common Ground Award

Christy Hicks served with the 4-H Youth Program in Pontiac, Mich., where she started a conflict resolution program for middle school students.

Mark Payne served with both City Year and Public Allies in Chicago, where he recruited young African-American males to volunteer and serve as role models for others in his Southside neighborhood.

Jamie Lee Manning organized city-wide service events in San Jose for the Martin Luther King, Jr.

holiday that brought together thousands of people from diverse backgrounds in hands-on community service projects to honor Dr. King's legacy and teachings.

Trampas Stucker, serving with the Washington Service Corps in his hometown of Tonasket, Wash., brought the special perspectives of those living with physical and learning disabilities to teach reading and math to economically disadvantaged, rural elementary school students.

Graciela Noriega served with the Center for Drug Free Living in Orlando, Fla., where she started Culture Shock, an education program for the city's young people that has now reached youth in other countries through an international pen pal program.

President Calls on Alums to Stay Involved

During his remarks at the anniversary event at the White House, President Clinton called on former AmeriCorps members to build on their experience and find other ways to serve.

"Like returned Peace Corps volunteers and military veterans," the President said, "those of you who are AmeriCorps members and alums represent an enormous national pool of know-how and can-do. You are already 150,000 strong and growing stronger."

To help AmeriCorps alums fulfill their pledge to "carry this commitment with me, this year and beyond," the President announced a new partnership between the Corporation for National Service and Habitat for Humanity, the American Red Cross, the Boys and Girls Clubs, America's Promise, the Points of Light Foundation, Big Brothers Big Sisters, the United Way, and the National Mentoring Partnership.

For more information about how you can stay involved call (202) 729-8180 or visit www.americorpsalums.org or www.americorps.org/members/.

AmeriCorps Members Take Aim at Digital Divide

When it comes to computer access, all children in the United States are not equal. But AmeriCorps members are taking steps to change that through PowerUP, an exciting new initiative aimed at closing the digital divide.

Launched in November, PowerUP is designed to give underserved children access to technology and guidance on how to use it. In schools and community centers around the country, PowerUP will provide young people with access to the wide range of information on the Internet and will help them develop skills to succeed in the 21st century.

PowerUP pilot programs began this fall in Seattle, San Jose, and Washington, D.C. By next year, more than 400 specially trained, full-time AmeriCorps*VISTA members will

serve at PowerUP centers in schools, housing projects, community centers, and other locations. Harris Wofford, chief executive officer of the Corporation for National Service, said, "AmeriCorps is proud to add people power to PowerUP. We know from experience that just putting computer hardware and an Internet connection in the schools is not enough. To unleash the full potential of young people—and the computer—children need to know more than just how to surf the net. AmeriCorps members will give students access to advanced technology and compelling programming, in a safe environment with a caring adult."

Through grants from the Waitt Family Foundation and the AOL Foundation, PowerUP will provide 50,000 computers and 100,000 AOL

accounts for free Internet access to sites throughout the country.

"AmeriCorps is putting the people power in the place so that the digital divide can be closed, not just through technology, but through people," said AOL Chairman and CEO Steve Case, who is chairing PowerUP. "There's no single solution to bridging the digital divide. It's going to take all of us working together to make a difference."

"In a few short years, the Internet has transformed nearly every aspect of our lives—and is fast transforming our society.

"The real question we face now is how we can make sure that everyone benefits from these changes. We must take steps now so that in the Internet century, no children are left behind."

With the expertise and dedication of AmeriCorps*VISTA members, many children will get their first taste of computer literacy and start down a path of success.

AmeriCorps*VISTA Names New Director

AmeriCorps*VISTA is starting its 35th year with a new director, from the state with the highest number of AmeriCorps*VISTA members per capita than any other state in the nation. Before his appointment in January, Matt Dunne was a member of the Vermont House of Representatives and a software executive with Logic Associates, Inc.

"I am honored to be asked to head a program that brings together youth activism and community service to develop long-term solutions in

the fight against poverty," he said. "My goal is to marry the historic core mission of VISTA with the contemporary challenges and opportunities of the 21st century."

Vermont's senators, Republican Jim Jeffords and Democrat Patrick Leahy, both praised Dunne's appointment. "Matt is innovative, energetic, and completely committed to America's youth and

public service," Sen. Jeffords said. Sen. Leahy called Dunne "a thoughtful coalition-builder who

knows how to get results. Few states appreciate and prize AmeriCorps*VISTA projects as fervently as we do in Vermont, and we are proud that a Vermonter will be helping to lead

AmeriCorps*VISTA as it crosses the threshold into next century."



AmeriCorps Alum Continues Service at Home and Abroad

We recently got this letter from Switzerland that shows that service can stay a part of your life after your AmeriCorps term ends.

Greetings AmeriCorps Members and Alums!

It's always exciting and inspiring for me to read the periodic updates of AmeriCorps members and projects and just think of the broad scope of the influence that the program has had already in such a short time—especially considering that I was a member of the first AmeriCorps*NCCC campus in the first year. Was it really five years ago?

After my days with AmeriCorps*NCCC, I served as an AmeriCorps*VISTA member at a homeless shelter in Austin, Texas (where I got the chance to work on projects with other AmeriCorps members) and taught special education at a high school in Austin for a few years. In Austin, I lived with a former NCCCer, Jennifer James from the Perry Point campus, who was also with AmeriCorps*VISTA and now works for a nonprofit agency and charter high school.

I'm taking this year to travel, work, and volunteer around Europe. It's like an NCCC spike, only the people speak different languages. Right now I'm teaching at an environmental education center in Switzerland, and I also hope to:

- * spend a month doing organic farming in Spain;
- * work at a homeless shelter in London;
- * volunteer with a peace and reconciliation community in Northern Ireland; and
- * work on an organic farm in Ireland.

After all that, I plan to return to the Boston area and look into graduate schools in social work or education. I would love to hear from AmeriCorps alums in the Boston area—and from my old NCCC friends! You can contact me at shannon_m_sullivan@yahoo.com.

The Ripples of Service

Josh Brennan, a second-year AmeriCorps member with Jumpstart Boston, spoke at the AmeriCorps opening ceremonies planned by the Massachusetts Service Alliance in October. Following are a few excerpts:

About two weeks ago, I was asked to speak about my experiences as a member of AmeriCorps and reasons for being an AmeriCorps member. Why do I do it?

The answer lies in outcomes. It's what happens after the fact, as a result of the service I put forth, that keeps me doing what I am doing. It's the impact. Not the immediate one, but the long-lasting ultimate impact that just keeps going and going.

The possibilities are endless for

what could happen. It's an amazing, unimaginable thing to think about. Picture yourself tossing a stone into a lake. You see the small splash it makes immediately, but it's what you don't see that makes that splash really matter. It's all the ripples from the splash continuing on and on that make the ultimate difference.

Every time I step out to serve, I think about my throw. Is it significant enough to make a difference? I tell myself, "Don't just serve to serve—serve to make a difference that lasts and lasts."

I have been given the opportunity to make an awesome difference in our society, and I am only 20 years old.



Josh with Massachusetts Governor Paul Celluci.

That's what I love about AmeriCorps.

I'd like to challenge you to make your ripples tidal waves. Let's douse the world with the service we do. Let's make it known what can happen from tossing one single stone.

Let's make it our personal mission to make big enough ripples so that eventually, every man and woman in this and every state, in every community across the nation, takes advantage of the opportunity to make a difference.



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